




MEMORANDUM

To: Planning Commission

From: Andrew Warren, Development Administrator 

Date: July 13, 2007

Subject: SUP 07-0004 – Special Use Permit for General Office use on the ground floor in the Downtown Commercial (DC) zoning district, requested by Jackson Square, LLC, 401 South Main Street, Suite 104

SUMMARY OF REQUEST

Request: SUP for General Office use on the ground floor

Property Location: 401 South Main Street, Suite 104

Tax Parcel Number: Tax Map Number 257-A-57, 257-A-58

Lot Size: .77 acres (33,541 sf)

Zoning District: Downtown Commercial (DC)

Adjacent Zoning District: East/South: R-4, Low-Density Residential
West/North: GC, General Commercial

Present Use: Vacant

Surrounding Uses: East/South: Educational Facility
West: Vacant
North: Gasoline Station

Neighborhood Meeting: 4:00 p.m., July 9, 2007

BACKGROUND

Jackson Square, LLC is proposing a General Office use on the ground floor of a new building in the Downtown Commercial (DC) zoning district in the Town of Blacksburg. General Office use is permitted by right on all floors except the ground floor in the DC zoning district. The use on the ground floor requires a Special Use Permit. The criteria to be considered in evaluation of a Special Use Permit are:

1. Conformance to the Comprehensive Plan, or to specific elements of the Plan, and to official Town policies adopted in relation thereto, including the purposes of the Zoning Ordinance.
2. Adherence to minimum adverse impact on the surrounding neighborhood or community. The proposal as submitted shall not cause adverse impacts as defined by Section 1181 (b) of the Zoning Ordinance. Adverse impacts considered may include, but not be limited to, traffic congestion, noise, lights, dust, drainage, water quality, air quality, odor, fumes and vibrations. Due regard is given to the timing of the operation, site design, access, screening, or other matters which might be regulated to mitigate adverse impact.

The approximately three-quarter acre lot is located on the southeast corner of Clay Street and South Main Street. The General Office use is proposed for suite 104 of the ground floor commercial space planned for the 3-story Clay Court building. The second and third floors contain 16 residential dwellings. This is a new building with six commercial suites of various sizes ranging from 618 square feet to 2,470 square feet. The subject area would be 1260 square feet. The total square footage of the ground floor commercial area is 8,504 square feet. Suite 102(618 square feet) was granted a special use permit for a real estate General Office use in 2006. Several other suites are currently occupied with by-right Retail uses. The applicant initially proposed an attorney's office in suite 104, however the applicant does not have a specific tenant available at this time. The applicant now requests the SUP for General Office use in order to maximize opportunities to lease the space.

NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING

A neighborhood meeting was held on July 9, 2007. Mr. Steve Hill, representing Jackson Square, LLC., attended. No other citizens attended.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Downtown Planning Sector and Economic Development chapters of the Comprehensive Plan were referenced for this analysis. The proposed office use is located in the Downtown Planning Sector of the Comprehensive Plan. The Downtown Planning Sector encompasses the east side of the 400 block of Main Street as its southern boundary line, including the former middle school property.

The Future Land Use map identifies this property as a Civic land use. Civic land use is defined as schools, government offices and buildings, clubs and other institutional uses. This area is also identified as Mixed Use Area D, which would support a mixture of office, retail, and residential uses if the surrounding properties were redeveloped.

As stated above, the use is permitted by-right, except on the ground floor in the Downtown Commercial zoning district. Although General Office use is not specifically considered a commercial use type, this use is not incompatible with commercial land use. In contrast the Comprehensive Plan recognizes that commercial space is limited,

particularly in the Downtown sector and emphasizes the need to reserve the more visible ground floor for retail space.

The committee may want to consider the location of the office use on the edge of the Downtown Commercial district as well.

ZONING ORDINANCE

General Office use is defined as *“Use of a site for business, professional, or administrative offices, excluding medical offices. Typical uses include real estate, insurance, management, travel, computer software or information systems research and development, or other business offices; organization and association offices; or law, architectural, engineering, accounting or other professional offices.”*

Downtown Commercial District –

General Office use is by-right on all floors except the ground floor in the Downtown Commercial district. The recently developed, commercial and residential development complies with all district Development Standards as approved by a site plan on May 18, 2005. The purpose of the district is to promote commercial opportunities including a diversity of specialty, retail services, cultural, recreation, entertainment activities, and public functions. The proposed General Office use does not involve changes to the property that would result in non-compliance.

Use and Design Standards –

The proposal complies with all applicable Use and Design General Standards for General Office use. For example, the principal windows of the office face onto Main Street and the site complies with the additional standard for the Downtown Commercial zoning district that requires parking to be located behind the front building line of the principle building.

Development Standards –

All exterior development standards are currently met. For example, parking and exterior lighting comply and were recently approved through a site plan review process on May 18, 2005. The maximum square footage any attached on the exterior façade facing Main Street is 15 square feet. The applicant has said that the sign will be one of two materials: first is a high density urethane material which is routed and painted and the second material is a channel letter sign mounted on a raceway which would be backlit. The applicant is not providing any further exterior alterations to the building as part of this special use permit process. Off-street parking is not required in the Downtown Commercial district, however a parking area with dedicated spaces for each suite exists to the rear of the building with vehicular access from Clay Street.

ADVERSE IMPACTS

No adverse impacts are anticipated due to traffic, parking, external lights, noise, dust, drainage, water quality, air quality, odor, fumes and vibrations.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Special Use Permit application being reviewed is a discretionary decision. The application is evaluated on conformance with the Comprehensive Plan and to official Town policies, including the purposes and development requirements of the Zoning Ordinance. In addition, the special use application is evaluated on minimum adverse impact on the surrounding neighborhood or community.

The applicant's proposal for a general office is not consistent with the Comprehensive Plan's future land use designation of a civic use, however it is consistent with the potential mixed use land uses designated in this area. The Comprehensive Plan is more supportive of retail uses on the ground floor rather than a General Office use. If approved, the percentage of office uses on the ground floor of Clay Court would be 22%. The proposal, as presented complies with all Zoning Ordinance district standards, use and design standards and development standards. No adverse impacts are expected due to a General Office use on the ground floor.